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CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS

July 20, 2006

USAID/CAR Bi-weekly Report

Regional

After 14 years of implementation, USAID's Health Partnerships Program Celebrates its Completion in Central Asia

The Health Partnerships Program announced its completion at the regional conference "Partnerships as a Strategy for Health Profession Development" held on July 11-12 in Astana, Kazakhstan. The conference was attended by representatives from the Ministries of Health of all five Central Asian countries, officials from other government institutions, and partners from U.S. and local universities. Implemented by the American International Health Alliance (AIHA), the Health Partnerships Program supported health care reform efforts in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan through volunteer-driven, peer-to-peer partnerships. The program worked with the region's leading institutions, communities, universities, and schools to build health sector capacity at both the national and regional levels.



Central Asia's women benefit from improved family medicine services, one of the focus areas of USAID's Health Partnerships Program.

Photo: AIHA

Among the program's many achievements is the Concept on Reforming the Medical Education, which was recently adopted by the Kazakh Government with the program's support and a series of model community-oriented primary care centers established in several cities across Kazakhstan. The program also helped open two Family Medicine Training Centers in Turkmenistan, where doctors and nurses learn skills-based, practical family medicine; a Health Management Training Center in Ashgabat for health facility managers; and the Republican Training Center for Family Medicine and the Nursing Learning Resource Center in Tajikistan. Thousands of region's health professionals were trained in primary health topics and emergency medicine, and a number of medical facilities have benefited from donations of medicines, supplies, and equipment through the USAID program.

USAID-funded TV Campaign Increases Central Asian Youth Risk Perception Regarding Injecting Drugs

From May to July 2006, USAID's Drug Demand Reduction Program is airing nationally and on local TV stations in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan an innovative TV public service announcement to increase youth awareness about the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS through injecting drugs. The campaign is targeting youth aged 15-25 who are at-risk for heroin/opiate use and injecting drugs by virtue of the fact that they live on Central Asia's main heroin trafficking routes. The 40-second announcement was produced with the involvement of youth as well as adults, parents, government representatives, and local religious leaders in the three countries. It invites youth to think about their memories of significant "firsts" in their lives, such as a first friend, and encourages the audience not to try a "first injection".



The USAID-funded public service announcement invites youth to think of the "first friend" memories.

Photo: DDRP/ PSI

The first wave of the TV campaign was aired in the winter of 2005 and received a high acclaim from local and international experts. A post-campaign survey in Uzbekistan showed that the announcement achieved more than 60% exposure in all target cities, and the target group retained very high levels of knowledge about the link between injecting drugs and HIV, which was the main message of the TV announcement. The Drug Demand Reduction Program is implemented in part by Population Services International.



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CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS

USAID-supported Accounting Exams Continue Enjoying Popularity in the Region

Nearly 3,000 men and women took Certified Accounting Practitioner or Certified International Professional Accountant level exams in 21 cities across Central Asia earlier this month. Majority of the registered test-takers were Kazakhs, who were then followed in increasingly smaller numbers by Uzbek, Kyrgyz, Turkmen, and Tajik examinees. The Certified International Professional Accountant program was introduced in the region as part of USAID's efforts to support accounting reform in Central Asia. It is the first program for international professional certification of accountants that is available in the Russian language. Good accounting that is based on international standards and practices is essential for enterprise managers and other market participants to make decisions that will improve the efficiency and profitability of enterprises, support the stability and transparency of financial markets, and enhance the general welfare of the population.



Newly certified accounting practitioners are proud to display a proof of their qualification, received through the USAID-supported program.

Photo: EDP

Kazakhstan

President of Kazakhstan Signs a Landmark "Program for Economic Development"

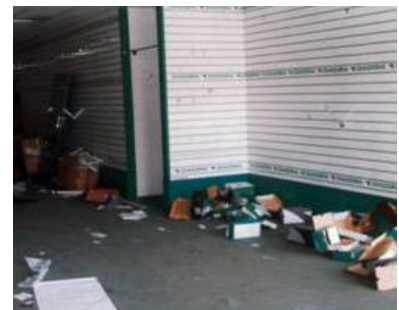
President Nursultan Nazarbayev on July 7, 2006 approved the Program for Economic Development (PED), a \$40 million cost-sharing program wherein the Government of Kazakhstan will incur an increasing share of the USAID Economic Growth program over four years (2006-2009). USAID will provide a total of \$24.5 million; the Kazakh Government - \$15.5 million. The President's signature follows ratification of the memorandum of understanding by both houses of parliament in recent weeks. The document was signed in May 2006 following talks between President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbaev and Vice President of the United States Richard Cheney in Astana. The signed memorandum of understanding provides for funding of Kazakhstani entrepreneurship projects within the program of economic cooperation. (For more information, please see the USAID/CAR bi-weekly dated May 16.)

Kyrgyzstan

USAID's Grants Restore Looted Businesses in Bishkek

In March 2006, USAID completed its six-month Looted Business Loan Support Program (LBLS) that facilitated the recovery of businesses that were either looted or suffered the consequences of looting during the March 2005 civil disturbances in Bishkek. The program was implemented by the USAID Enterprise Development Project (EDP), administered by the Pragma Corporation.

The LBLS program was designed to encourage borrowers to use banking services and to leverage the grant amount through the conditionality of having to take a loan. The program dispersed \$700,000 of grants, ranging from \$300 to \$5,000, to 179 Kyrgyz businessmen and women. In conjunction with USAID grants, entrepreneurs received more than \$2,222,000 of loans from one of the EDP's fifteen partner financial lending institutions. Through a combination of grants and loans, the USAID program covered 67% of all losses that were reported by grantees. Over 70% of loans and grants were dispersed to businesses operating in retail sector, which was worst-hit by looters. "The grant



USAID's program helped this looted business (see above) to re-open operations (below).

Photos: E. Kolosova, S. Shirobokov





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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS

money was important for my business recovery, and the U.S. Government was the only one who has provided any real support. As well as the financial support, the grant signifies something maybe even more important to me - moral support from the U.S. Government,” noted a beneficiary of the USAID Looted Business Loan Support Program.

In a USAID-supported Conference, Kyrgyz Religious and Civic Organizations Discuss Their Role in Promoting Freedom of Religion and Expression

On July 12, the Kyrgyz State Agency for Religious Affairs with USAID support organized a national conference entitled “Development of Religious and Civic Initiatives in Promoting Freedom of Religion and Expression and Conflict-free Coexistence.” Participants represented a diverse range of religious and civic organizations from all regions of the country, as well as local and national government agencies. This national-level forum discussed religious issues of concern to Kyrgyz citizens and laid the foundations for future dialogue between the State Agency for Religious Affairs and religious organizations to promote freedom of religion. Participants also organized a working group to cooperate with the Parliament on reforming the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations. The conference revealed that tensions run deep and that many of these issues require much more attention if solutions are to be found. The State Secretary and others called for toughening registration rules for religious organizations and for tightening inspection.

In preparation to the conference, USAID assisted the Kyrgyz State Agency in organizing a series of regional focus groups and seminars to discuss local religious issues and tensions, as well as to gain a greater awareness of local and international laws that protect the freedom of religion.

Tajikistan

USAID’s Project launches its Safe Motherhood, Newborn Care, and Family Planning Strategy in Tajikistan

ZdravPlus began implementation of the strategy by initiating two Safe Motherhood pilots (one urban and another rural) in the Maternity Ward of the City Medical Center of Dushanbe and Maternity Ward of the Yavan Central District Hospital. The pilots, as well as the strategy, will assist the Ministry of Health of Tajikistan in establishing and providing quality services in accordance with WHO standards of evidence-based medicine to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality and morbidity. The improvement of the quality of the obstetric and neonatal care and reduction of maternal and child death are identified as priority directions for Tajikistan by the Millennium Development Goals.

To open the pilots, 37 doctors and nurses from the two medical facilities attended a Safe Motherhood training based on WHO Effective Perinatal Care materials. Obstetricians and gynecologists, midwives, neonatologists, and neonatology nurses learned to apply evidence-based safe motherhood practices at the Dushanbe City Medical Center, also supported by USAID. ZdravPlus goals include an increased percentage of women who accept a method of family planning post abortion or post partum, and a decreased percentage of pregnant women and newborns who receive unnecessary, and potentially harmful, screening and diagnostic procedures, medications, and hospitalizations. ZdravPlus is a comprehensive health reform project, implemented by a consortium of partners led by Abt. Associates.



Health specialists in the two USAID’s safe motherhood pilots will be providing quality obstetric and neonatal care to Tajik mothers and children.

Photo: ZdravPlus

USAID-Funded Junior Achievement Programs Received Tajik Ministry of Education Approval

Junior Achievement has received approval from the Ministry of Education of Tajikistan to train teacher in Junior Achievement programs in partnership with teacher retraining institutes. Junior Achievement signed partnership contracts with the National Retraining Institute in Dushanbe and four Regional Retraining



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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS

Institutes in Kurgan-Tube, Khojand, Khorog, and Kulyab. According to the agreements, the institutes will provide training venues and invite participants, whereas Junior Achievement will provide trainers and training materials. Initially, at least 200 teachers will be trained, 50 from each region. As partnership relations develop, the parties plan to open teacher resource centers at the retraining institutes. USAID has provided more than \$200,000 to date in support of Junior Achievement's work in Tajikistan. The organization provides business and economics education at schools and is training young people to understand the risks and rewards of free market enterprise to strengthen the market economies of Central Asia.



With USAID support, Junior Achievement provides Tajik youth with opportunities to study business and economics.

Photo: Junior Achievement